

Introduction

A/Commr. John Ferguson, C/Supt Trevor Daroux and C/Supt. Peter Tewfik will be the Gold Commander during this event. We will be using the National Decision Model and maintaining a log for audit purposes, as will Silver Command.

Overview

We are dealing with a global health pandemic which is affecting Albertans, and Canadians on an unprecedented scale. The protest in Coutts is in response to the health measures and restrictions imposed by Canada and the Province of Alberta to mitigate the transmission of the virus. We will ensure all persons are dealt with in a fair, reasonable and ethical manner that respects individual rights, and is in line with the RCMP Mission, Vision and Values. We are aware there may be emotional issues for employees, citizens and communities.

Summary

Over the course of January 29th to present there are several protests that have occurred and that are being planned in response to the health measures and restrictions imposed by Canada and the Province of Alberta. Open source intelligence suggests that additional legal and illegal activities, including vehicle convoys and protests, may occur. Not enough information is known at time of publication to assess the viability of the information. The assessment is subject to change as more information is gathered.

While these protests are spread throughout the Province, the area of concern right now remains the Coutts Border crossing because of the build up of people and traffic, and how it is being viewed as a convergence point. We recognize and understand that any action, or inaction, by police can result in further legal and legal actions at this point, and other areas across the Province of Alberta and the country

Information and Intelligence

What we know:

- Beginning on 2022-01-29 (Saturday) Participants met at Flying J (1005 43 St S, Lethbridge AB) at 0500hrs before proceeding to Coutts Border Crossing (Highway 4 South, Coutts AB). Over the course of the day a blockade was established at the border crossing which completely prevented access to the border and limited significantly access to the Town of Coutts impacting some emergency service delivery and significantly disrupting residents and schooling.

- The Port of Coutts operates 24 hours, and is the largest POE in Alberta. Hundreds of commercial and personal vehicles travel through this major thoroughfare on any given day.

- There are border crossings located at Coutts, Del Bonita, and Carway, Alberta. Coutts is the only 24-hour crossing. As a result of the blockade and impact to travel in the area the other border entries have extended hours and are receiving commercial vehicle traffic as a mitigation strategy.

- The Coutts POE is positioned on Highway 4 on the Canadian side, and I-15 on the USA side. Coutts is in the Milk River detachment area, Del Bonita is in the Raymond detachment area, and Carway is in the Cardston detachment area.

As of 1700hrs on 2022-02-03:

- Currently one of two northbound lanes and one of two southbound lanes of highway 4 are open through the main Coutts Border protest area.
- Congestion is growing at an RCMP check point that is set up 18km north of the main site on highway 4 at RCMP checkpoint 10, which was set in place by police for safety and security reasons. The vehicular congestion has swollen throughout the day and now includes approximately 250 vehicles and approximately 500 people.
- The protesters at both the main site and checkpoint 10 remain stable and peaceful, however the protesters at checkpoint 10 are less organized and more volatile.
- Traffic is able to flow freely from both northbound and southbound lanes on highway 4 to and from the border.

What do we need:

Identify Intel Bronze for ongoing Intelligence from social media on when and where these protests and other activities, both legal and illegal, may be occurring, preferably with as much advance notice as possible.

Identify Comms Bronze for ongoing external communications as this event unfolds.

Ongoing monitoring of events and escalation in different areas to blockades and significant disruptions.

Contingencies for emergency personnel to respond in the event of an emergency during closures

Identify Silver and Bronze Commanders for affected districts and support services to work with the tactical commands.

How will we get it:

There will be one (1) Divisional Gold Commander (rotated amongst 3 people) and one Divisional (1) Silver Commander. At the SAD District level there is, one SAD Silver Commander on site and a deputy silver commander in SAD operations. Both command structures contain a number of Bronze commanders designated for WAD, CAD, SAD, DEOC, traffic, Federal Policing, Comms, OCC, CIP, and Intelligence. We have a designated bronze from the Provincial Sheriffs. They will delegate sub-bronze as required to support their command structure.

Bronze Commanders (and/or alternate) will conduct ongoing risk assessments and confirm number of RCMP resources required. Bronze Command is to manage their resources to maintain efficiency and ensure primacy of operations are met.

District Bronze have been directed to monitor and report events through to DEOC and CROPS as they are unfolding or they become aware of information and intelligence related to emerging protests.

Intel Bronze has established a process for the intake and distribution of information and intelligence from internal and external sources and created a situational report for distribution.

Comms Bronze is working on our external messaging and scanning social media for any relevant information.

DEOC has been activated to Level 3

Division Gold command has established a liaison with National Headquarters and there is a reviewer on call to do NOC reporting.

The Commanding Officer has an established liaison with the Provincial Government (DLE) and there is a reviewer on call to do Provincial reporting.

Threat/Risk

Political:

The protest is expressing dissatisfaction with GoC and GoA for actions taken to manage the COVID-19 health emergency.

There are protests occurring across the Country and in the nations Capital in relation to Federal and Provincial government vaccine requirements and health measures.

Many industries and people depend on the free movement of their equipment, goods, and services through the Coutts/Sweetgrass corridor. Businesses are incurring incremental costs as perishable loads are spoiled, drivers are rerouted and border paperwork and customs details are re-written."

There is a counter position to the protest that blockaded and slowed down border traffic emphasizing the importance of jobs, getting people back to work, and keeping the flow of goods moving. Multiple organizations have cited the unintended impacts the protest is having on producers and the industry as a whole.

Economical:

One of the goals is to maintain commerce and trade for the local business community.

The vice-president of the Alberta and Saskatchewan division of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, said between 800 and 1,200 trucks cross at the Coutts-Sweetgrass entry every day.

There is \$15.9 billion in two-way trade a year at Coutts/ Sweetgrass crossing, amounting to \$44 million per day in trade. According to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters all industries have been affected by the blockade, which has worsened a "supply chain crisis" created by a trucker shortage, two years of pandemic impacts and major weather events such as the B.C. floods and winter storms.

Social:

The blockade and media focus around the dialogue has had a negative impact on the community of Coutts. The community was cut off from mail access, school buses, the Mayor received threats, harassment and intimidation;

There is a threat to community cohesion;

A potential threat is against maintaining confidence in police (local and organizationally)

Legal:

We are engaged with Federal and Provincial Counsel to ensure we have good authorities for our actions and are on solid footing for police interventions;

Our actions have to balance freedom of expression and freedom of association for those protesting as well as freedom of movement with those protesting **and** those affected by the protest as well as protecting life and property.

Organizational:

Maintain an ability to manage scale to the event with specific emphasis on surge capacity

Maintain business as usual (core policing) in affected areas

Plan to sustain protracted operations as required

Forecast and manage competing interests/pressures

Strategic Threats:

From Federal Policing National Intelligence (FPNI) and Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT) report IMCIT STA 2022-07 – 2022-02-03:

Solidarity actions have been identified in every province and at least one territory, and enforcement at any one event will likely be perceived negatively and may spark more solidarity activities or adverse behavior in other parts of the country. The perceived knowledge of solidarity actions globally may also energize ongoing protests throughout Canada.

No formal organized plot of violence has been identified. The use of convoys as a protest tactic is trending nationally and poses multiple issues to public and officer safety. In addition, factors such as the circulation of misinformation, discussions about military enforcement, exhaustion, substance abuse, altercations amongst counter-protesters and with law enforcement and the influence of ideologically motivated actors or charismatic speakers may impact the temperature of the crowd. The potential for serious violence by a lone actor or fringe group cannot be discounted. As with all large public order events, these factors may have the potential to galvanize larger portions of the protesters to violence.

It is acknowledged and understood that any action or inaction by police has a reputational risk to the organization.

Powers and Policy

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Criminal Code of Canada

Food and Drugs Act

Public Health Act of Canada

Public Health Act of Alberta

Emergency Management

Emergencies Act
National Defence Act
Civil Power
Canada Transportation Act
Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act
Railway Safety Act
International Bridges and Tunnels Act
Motor Vehicle Transport Act
Aeronautics Act
Canada Shipping Act
Canada Labour Code
Department of Employment and Social Development Act
Employment Insurance Act
Financial Administration Act
Access to Information Act
Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
Customs Act
Broadcasting Act
Quarantine Act
Critical Infrastructure Defence Act (Alberta)
Alberta Traffic Safety Act (Alberta)
Public Highways Development Act (Alberta)

Options and Contingencies

There is a need for police to be involved in this to ensure the public peace and public safety.

Within a legal framework and using lawful authorities the police response will be measured and proportionate to achieve the objectives. Consideration will be given to tactics and strategies that limit using force.

The primary objectives will allow for peaceful and lawful protest. Preservation of life will take primacy of police response with property damage being a lesser response but will be a consideration within the response plan. Commerce and public travel will be maintained where possible.

The preservation of access and egress routes for emergency responders will be prioritized to ensure the safety of participants, responding agency personnel, general public and residents.

It is critical that the RCMP consider measures to support community members being able to move, community services maintained and emergency vehicles be able to respond to public emergencies that may develop.

Resourcing

Article 9 has been invoked to shift resources within the Province of Alberta as required in response to these events and to draw on resources from other provinces to support the efforts in the Province of Alberta. DEOC is managing the resource requirements and co-ordinating the deployments. Joining instructions have been developed for members being deployed.

Action and Review

Our response to these events in Alberta will have three objectives:

1. Maintain the flow of traffic, even if slowed or temporarily disrupted to support commerce and public travel. This includes access and egress routes for emergency responders, the general public and residents. It is critical that the RCMP consider measures to support community members being able to move, community services maintained and emergency vehicles be able to respond to public emergencies that may develop.
2. Prevent established blockade sites from growing in size and take steps to limit how large blockade sites can become to prevent overwhelming resources.
3. Ensure an adequate investigative structure for enforcement action. The RCMP will take a “firm but fair” approach with respect to enforcement measures as a result of significant disruption or blockades. The RCMP approach in Alberta will be collaborative and engaging in keeping with our conventional style. That said we will prefer charges over warnings for actions that cause significant disruption or harm to the communities even if those charges follow the event itself. This approach will assist with social cohesion and prevent a breakdown of law and order.

The Alberta RCMP will monitor the protest status and collect, organize, and integrate related information to update operations as necessary.

Overall Aim

Maintain CORE policing function

Ensure primacy of operations

Ensure public safety is continually met

Objectives

Protect life & property

Minimise crime and disorder & provide proportionate policing response

Maintain the health and wellness of employees involved in response

Minimise disruption to Community and Businesses

Maintain confidence in policing

Maintain community cohesion

Maintain business as usual internally

Outcomes

Preferred:

Commerce and public travel maintained with minimal impact to law enforcement and public safety

Acceptable:

Commerce and public travel are maintained, with minor impact due to disruption, some service delivery disruption, some crimes or small pockets of public disorder, confidence maintained, business as usual maintained

Non-Acceptable:

Unable to maintain Commerce and public travel, significant disruption to community norms, loss of life, significant disruption, significant crimes, significant public disorder, loss of confidence in policing, business as usual significantly affected

Policing Style:

Firm but Fair Approach with an “enforcement” approach. Within a legal framework the police response will be measured and proportionate, based on the nature of the event, disruption or disorder.

Tactical Parameters:

Mode of dress: Service Order #1, High Visibility Vest/Jackets, Full use of force options

To also incorporate the use of PPE during operations

Command Protocols:

Command structure in place

Gold - Set overall aim and strategy (see above)

Silver - Liaise with providing clarity and de-conflicting information

Bronze - Execute plan(s) devised by Silver Command.

Briefing/Debriefing:

Silver Command responsibility, however Bronze provides briefings from their respective responsibilities

Stakeholders:

Public Safety Canada

Government of Canada
RCMP National Headquarters
Health Canada
Canadian Border Services Agency
Government of Alberta – Justice and Solicitor General
Alberta Health Services
RCMP
Community Peace Officer
Alberta Sheriffs
Alberta Commercial Vehicle Enforcement
Alberta Transportation